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EX - 786
5 December 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: "American Defectors to the USSR"

1. The attached material was part of a soft file entitled "American Defectors to the USSR", which was set up by SR/6 (Support) around 1960 and maintained by various SR components until ca. 1963. The compilations were derived from a variety of sources, and contain both classified and overt data.
2. In the fall of 1966, the files were turned over to CI Staff. In most instances, basic information was then abstracted for the US Defector Machine Program. In all instances in which the material was unique, or represented a valuable collation effort, it has been incorporated into the appropriate 201 file, along with a copy of this memorandum.
3. It is suggested that any dissemination of this data should be coordinated with SB Division and with CI Staff (CI/MRO), in view of the frequently inadequate sourcing and of the fact that disseminations have already been made through the US Defector Machine Program.

JLBender
JLBender 03

Orig - CI/MRO
1 - RD/FI
1 - SB/RMO
1 - CI/R&A/JLBender
1 - CI/R&A/chono

*none up to
11/7/67*

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201-265472

2189

RETURN TO CIA
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A# 2869

WEBSTER Robert Edwin, 201-265472
23 October 1928, Tiffin, Ohio
Plastics expert; Rand Co. employee

All entries through May 1962 come from 201 unless otherwise noted.

Circa 6-14 March 1959. He made preliminary trip to Moscow in connection with planning the Rand exhibit for next summer's U.S. fair.

Circa 3 May - late June 1959. Second trip to Moscow to help set up the Rand exhibit. Went steady with Vera PLOTNIKOVA, married, hostess at Hotel Ukraina/corrector for a Soviet correspondence school's English language department/English teacher at Medical Institute. She always met him outside so that colleagues would not know she dating American, but somebody knew because she usually had to request permission to take evening off - and she always got it. Always had the taxi leave her near but not at her home, and allowed nothing more than one kiss, at end of evening. He told her his wife didn't understand him, etc., and that he would come back to Moscow and marry her. Her name also reported as Vera Ivanovna IVCHENKO, probably her maiden name. She might possibly be identical with Vera PLOTNIKOVA, reported in OO-3-3,110,059 of 24 Sept 1958 (SR/OS/BIO) as a 20-year old elevator operator at the Ukraina; she became very friendly with the source's wife (Russian-speaking) but asked her not to show friendliness in public, met her elsewhere to talk, shared confidences, spoke poor to fair English.

3 July 1959. His third trip to the USSR. He had about six pieces of luggage, crammed with nylon hose, Ella Fitzgerald records, copies of U.S. magazines, etc., and several boxes of books, but "he did not take heavy clothing because he felt this might look suspicious" !!! He had no trouble whatsoever with Soviet customs, and he went out with Vera on his first night back.

Circa 11 July 1959. He joined two high Soviet exhibit officials at their restaurant table at the fair and told them he wanted to defect. They arranged meeting few days later with government representative POPOV and SHISHKIN - for dinner at Praga (a favorite KGB hangout). OVER &

Circa 15 July 1959. Under influence of vodka and food at Praga, wrote letter to Supreme Soviet requesting stay as Soviet citizen. POPOV said not to tell anyone, since answer might take a while. Gave him questionnaire to take back to hotel and fill out: blog plus reasons for defection.

14 August 1959. Sent his wife a telegram saying had sold 100 units, which untrue.

August 1959. More meetings in private rooms at nice restaurants. The Soviets impressed on him that if he stayed he could never leave. Questioning included debriefing by two chemists to see if he really could make the spray gun (for plastic coating jobs) demonstrated at Rand exhibit; jokes about buying him instead of gun.

Late August 1959. Wife cabled him asking if he coming back. She wanted to know so that she could decide whether to put the children into usual school (if he coming home) or move to her parents' home and put them in school there (if he not). He cabled to go ahead and put them into usual school.

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2 September 1959. POPOV met him at Metropol restaurant and told him he had been accepted. This was just after closing of fair and three days before Rand drove to leave for home. P asked where he would like to work and when W said Moscow informed him it would be Leningrad. (W later told R. Rand and Consul Snyder that he had been offered work in many cities.) W requested a vacation; granted. Meeting with POPOV and SHCHUPIN on subway steps; arrangements for W to get away from Rand group without being noticed.

10 September 1959. Sent to Leningrad with interpreter Volodya [see also Ricciardelli case]. Given 1000 old rubles and promised more. Met by Aleksey of Inturist in Leningrad. Kept changing hotels so that Rand group couldn't get him. Had left note saying planned travel around USSR before returning, but they smelled a rat and were trying to locate him anyway. Volodya stayed there with him; went sightseeing, applied for job at Leningrad Scientific Research Institute. He was allowed to call Vera, who came right up and brought the rest of his baggage; affair began.

Circa mid-October 1959. Returned to Moscow.

16 October 1959. MFA called US Embassy to say that W had assumed Soviet citizenship.

17 October 1959. Confrontation meeting at Moscow OVIR, with Rand and Snyder present. Newspaper report said it was emotional scene at Embassy and that W said he had not yet received Soviet passport, but this probably wrong. True story seems be that W signed expatriation form, kept his U.S. passport nevertheless (on pretext that he didn't have it with him, which he really did), and followed Soviet instructions in telling Snyder that he had received Soviet passport on 21 September (which he hadn't), had defected for political reasons (which he didn't), etc. According to information in CI/SIG files, Snyder said that the only discrepancy between W's story and Embassy's facts was that he seemed honestly ignorant of two phone calls he supposedly made to Rand office in Moscow. He said he might have authorized them to be made in his name. Note that both calls purportedly received by Rand's Soviet employee Galina Ivanovna MEDNIKINA while she alone in office.

October 1959. A Washington Post article of 21 May 1962 said that he changed his mind after only three months in the USSR and went to the Embassy for a U.S. reentry permit, but that it was turned down and he had to wait a year to reapply. [In the light of other reports, this seems thoroughly garbled and to be disregarded.]

Circa 18 October 1959. Immediately or shortly after the confrontation meeting, he and Vera took off for a vacation in Sochi.

18 November 1959. The New York Times wrote that he had written his parents he was planning to marry a Soviet girl.

Circa 18 ~~xxxxxx~~ November 1959. After a month in Sochi, he and Vera returned to settle in Leningrad. Vera was his assistant and translator, and according to Rand [how would he know?] she got about 2000 rubles a month. He was assigned to make the spray gun, at a salary of 2 00 a month plus semi-annual bonus of 500-600 rubles, this was equal to the salary of the chief of Lab #5 where he worked. His only document was a slip from OVIR saying that he had applied for a passport. They lived at Morozovskiy ~~xxxxxx~~ Prospekt house #3, apt 18, Leningrad K-32, a three-room

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apartment with bath.

Late December 1959 or early January 1960. Received Soviet internal passport.

27 January 1960. Received 6 December letter from his father telling him his mother now in mental hospital because of his defection and reminding him of responsibility for his children, etc. He decided go home but told no one.

3 March 1960. He wrote father asking help to return home and asking why his father hadn't replied to his 5 February letter (which the father had never gotten).

13 and 16 March 1960. He wrote his father that the family should come visit him in the U.S.R. About this time Rand advised the father to get W's phone number so that they could talk to him.

1 April 1960. Rand reported receiving a wire from W giving his phone in Leningrad as G-23705. This was phone at lab, where father called him 2 Apr.

5 April 1960. W wrote his father that he would be in Moscow for the May Day celebrations and would call at the Embassy. He felt certain of returning to the U.S. and told father not to come visit him after all.

24 April 1960. Rand telephoned L, who confirmed desire return U.S.

1st May 1960. Volodya had arranged invitation for W and Vera to Moscow parade. They went. No mention Powers.

1st May 1960. He visited U.S. Embassy, where not challenged by Soviet guards because of American appearance. Snyder told him how go about getting exit visa. Information in CI/SIG files adds that W said at this interview that he had recently made a speech to a large audience on why he left the U.S. Claims said nothing derogatory to U.S. Was told speech recorded for future radio use.

6 May 1960. He wrote father requesting invitations necessary for Soviet exit permit. Told Vera who "at first" was "hurt and annoyed". Vera, six months pregnant, had to approve his exit request, which she did, possibly assuming it wouldn't be granted anyway.

14 May 1960. Rand was back in Moscow and phoned L.

18 July 1960. Father sent authenticated invitation letters.

26 July 1960. W wrote father details of May Day trip. Still no mention of Powers, though Rand had told press all about freeze (caused by U-2) which he ran into when he left the U.S.R. by car in June 1960.

18 August 1960. Daughter Svetlana born. W adopted her a few days later, explaining that he did not intend to marry Vera because he was not divorced from his first wife.

August 1960. W had completed everything for exit application. From now on, Vera was more attentive to him and officials came from Moscow to ask him why he was unhappy.

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October 1960. Exit permit denied.

Summer 1961. W and Vera vacationed at beach near Alga. Vera received final divorce from first husband.

August 1961. W made second exit application.

26 February 1962. This was the date W received exit permit, according to what father told W. (CI/SIG files)

2 March 1962. W wrote parents that he did not have much money saved and might need it for Moscow stay. (CI/SIG)

23 March 1962. Cleveland Plain Dealer article said that when he last wrote "I had job in Rostov-on-Don, also "I:to Dept ~~xxxxxxx~~ aides said in Washington today that this is the first case of its kind in which the Russians have granted an exit visa". This inaccurate: he was never even in Rostov-on-Don so far as is known, and Oswald for one had already been granted an exit permit. (CI/SIG)

24 March 1962. Quit work, thinking about to leave.

May 1962. He was met by no one upon arrival in Moscow. Departed to small hotel where presented note from Vera asking for cheap room. He had not learned any Russian.

18 May 1962. Traded Soviet internal passport for exit passport, at OVIR. Meanwhile ran out of money. Vera sent him some from Leningrad.

Later in May. Received money and plane ticket from father. Returned Vera's loan plus extra, via LP correspondent.

20 May 1962. Arrived in U.S. under alien quota. Extensively debriefed by CIA, FBI, etc. Psych assessment that he unemotional, not the type to learn from experience, thoughtless of ~~xxxx~~ others' feelings, might be bought off by Soviets if in need.

Technician Home After Stay in Soviet

PITTSBURGH, May 20 (AP) Robert Webster, an American technician who gave up his citizenship and left his family for Russia, returned home tonight "a little confused and tired."

The 33-year-old Webster, who left his wife and two children when he went to Russia, said he was going home to nearby Zelienople "to rest a little and live with my father."

The United States Embassy in Moscow said it was informed he left behind a Russian girl and her baby in Leningrad.

He told newsmen at New York International Airport he hoped for a reconciliation with his wife, who has divorced him.

He said in Pittsburgh, "I missed my children and family and wife, of course."

Webster had gone to Russia in 1959 to set up a Rand Corp. plastics exhibit in Moscow. In October of that year, he appeared at the American Embassy, turned in his passport and renounced his United States citizenship.

Three months later, however, Webster had changed his mind. He returned to the Embassy and asked for a permit to re-enter the United States. But he was turned down and then had to wait a year before he could apply again.

Webster was met in New York by two men who identified themselves as being with the Rand Corp.

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Post 5/24/62

Handwriting sample of Vera Ivanova PLATONOVA, wife of Robert Edward
Webster

1. *Красавица*
2. *Супр. с мн*
неб. ет и с н
красавица
3. *Крас. с мн*
крас
4. *г. 000 12. 3x4*
5. *Красавица*
- 6.